

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 21, line 13, has been amended as follows:

C2 -Then, the released NO₂ is reduced by unburned HC, H₂, and CO contained in the exhaust gas, and discharged as N₂, as expressed by (NO + CO = 1/2 N₂ + CO, (NO + H₂ = 1/2 N₂ + H₂O).

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

~~1. (Amended) An exhaust gas purifying apparatus of an internal combustion engine, comprising:~~

C3 ~~exhaust gas purifying means, provided in an exhaust passage of the internal combustion engine, for absorbing NO_x in exhaust gas when an air-fuel ratio of the exhaust gas is lean, and releasing or reducing the absorbed NO_x when an oxygen concentration of the exhaust gas is reduced;~~

~~a light-off catalyst provided upstream of the exhaust gas purifying means in the exhaust passage, said light off catalyst having a lower O₂ storage capability than said exhaust gas purifying means;~~

~~the light-off catalyst and the exhaust gas purifying means are in an exhaust passage in series so that all the exhaust gas from the engine passes through both catalysts regardless of the engine operation modes; and~~

~~control means for controlling the air/fuel ratio of the exhaust gas so that an atmosphere having a reduced oxygen concentration is produced around~~

03 said exhaust gas purifying means when an NO_x conversion efficiency of the exhaust gas purifying means is decreased.
